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Fact Sheet

Pee Dee Region Capacity Use Designation

- Why is the Department of Health and Environmental Control (DHEC) considering designating the Pee Dee Region as a Capacity Use Area?

In accordance with the *Groundwater Use and Reporting Act*, Title 49, Section 5 of the S.C. Code of Laws, DHEC has investigated the available information about groundwater conditions in the Pee Dee Region (Florence, Darlington, Marlboro, Dillon, Williamsburg, and Marion counties). The purpose of this investigation was to determine if designation as a Capacity Use Area is warranted.

- What are the results of DHEC's investigation?

The major aquifers in these counties used as drinking water supplies are the shallow aquifer system, the Black Creek aquifer, the Middendorf aquifer, and the Cape Fear aquifer.

Comprehensive groundwater investigations in the Pee Dee area have documented progressive groundwater level declines and an increasing demand on the groundwater resource as a result of industrial and commercial growth. The Middendorf and Cape Fear aquifers are the main sources of groundwater for Darlington and Marlboro counties. The City of Florence uses 13 wells completed in the Middendorf aquifer. Before development, the groundwater level in the Middendorf aquifer as measured in Florence was 110 feet above sea level. When measured in 2001, the groundwater level was 85 feet below sea level, a total decline of 195 feet.

Groundwater levels in the Black Creek aquifer around the Town of Andrews were approximately 55 feet above mean sea level prior to development. By 1995, they had declined to 198 feet below sea level, a decline of 253 feet. The most recent measurement in 2001 showed this level had recovered to 154 feet below sea level, but this is still a significant decline. Demands for groundwater are certain to increase in the future.

- What does this technical information mean?

DHEC concludes from the technical information gathered in the investigation that the groundwater supplies of the Pee Dee Region have been used to the degree that coordination and regulation of groundwater supplies have become desirable and necessary.

- Are there other Capacity Use areas in our state?

There are currently three Capacity Use areas: the Lowcountry Capacity Use area, the Trident Capacity Use area, and the Waccamaw Capacity Use area.

- What are the requirements in a Capacity Use area?

The regulatory requirements only affect large groundwater users. Anyone who withdraws 3 million gallons or more in any one month must receive a permit from DHEC. Also, the amounts of groundwater withdrawn are reported to DHEC each year so that usage can be tracked. DHEC routinely publishes water use data for the state.

- What is the purpose of the Capacity Use Program?

The goal of the program is not to prevent the use of groundwater, but to help ensure that this finite and valuable resource is available for everyone to use by using best management practices. The legislative policy stated in the *Groundwater Use and Reporting Act* is very clear: "The General Assembly declares that the general welfare and public interest require that the groundwater resources of the State be put to beneficial use to the fullest extent to which they are capable, subject to reasonable regulation, in order to conserve and protect these resources, prevent waste, and to provide and maintain conditions which are conducive to the development and use of water resources."

- Are there any benefits to being designated as a Capacity Use area?

Yes, there are several benefits. A local groundwater management plan will be developed, in coordination with local governments and groundwater users, that will help guide DHEC's permitting decisions. The permitting process allows DHEC to work with new users of the groundwater resource to help ensure best management practices are utilized, and that only the amount of groundwater necessary for that particular activity is used.

If you have any questions, please contact Mr. David Baize at (803) 898-4272 or by e-mail: baizedg@dhec.sc.gov.